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## DIMITRI MITRINOVIC SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL TRANSFER EUROPE – THE BALKANS – EUROPE – THE UNITED KINGDOM<sup>1</sup>

**Summary:** The paper analyses the life and work of Dimitrije/Dimitri Mitrinovic (1887–1953) in the context of cultural transfer and Europeanisation. His enrolment at the Mostar Gymnasium is seen as the most important episode of his youth in terms of intellectual development. His contacts with the futurist movement in Rome (1911–13) and intellectual circles in Munich and Berlin (1913–14) are identified as a U-turn in the development of his concepts and the beginning of his full-scale cosmopolitanism and universalism. From the Forte Kreis he accepted the idea that a small intellectual circle, which would include leading spirits of the age, could transform the world. The experience of the Great War in London convinced him that London could offer him a good opportunity to create his own circle of followers, and two examples of his compatriots that he witnessed are discussed in this paper. The emergence of his own philosophical and cultural views is analysed in terms of cultural transfers between 1899 and the 1920s when his ideas and concepts were finally formatted. His concepts from the 1920s and 1930s were a blend of social activism, esotericism, Gnosticism, Far Eastern traditions, European philosophy, Alder's and Jung's psychology, some socialist political ideas and the European project. They were rather eclectic and syncretic, and that has created problems in their understanding for both his contemporaries and subsequent researchers. He preferred to have a small group of dedicated followers, or his own school, rather than a social or political movement. He indeed created something very close to a political movement in the New Britain Movement in 1932–34, but he was then instrumental in dismantling it. The only group that he kept was the New Europe Group (1931–1957), which tried to propagate the ideas of a European federation in Britain. Instead of leading a big political movement, he opted, in the last two decades of his life, to educate a small group of some 30–40 very dedicated British followers with the aim of culturally transforming the world. His legacy in Serbia and Yugoslavia is seen mostly through the sensibilisation of this culture for Indian and Far Eastern influences and to a lesser extent for the European project. His British and global legacy is more difficult to trace, but his influence on Alan Watts probably left an enduring legacy. Emphasis on culture and the whole system of reconciling opposite political and cultural views, something that he called the third force, still produces interest among researchers. His cosmopolitanism and globalism offer certain lessons even today, and so does his cultural construction of European project.

**Key words:** cultural transfer, Europeanisation, cosmopolitanism, revelation, New Britain, European project, New Age

Dimitrije Mitrinovic was born in the village of Donji Poplat in Hercegovina on October 21, 1887. Nine years earlier, by the stipulations of the Berlin Treaty of July 1878, Austria-Hungary got the mandate to occupy the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mitrinovic was born to an ethnic Serbian family in an era when the concept of nationalism was being transferred from Europe to his native region. Yet, in these

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1 This research was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, Project No. 7747152, Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia from the 19<sup>th</sup> till the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – CTES.

areas, nationalism was just starting to emerge, and it was soon fused with two local ethnic identities: Serbian and Croatian. Mitrinović's parents were unusually educated for that period. His mother Vidosava came from a Serbian family from Novi Sad, in what was then Southern Hungary, and spoke German and Hungarian. His father Mihajlo was a local teacher who had a surprisingly large private library, and his collection consisted of several hundred books.<sup>2</sup> The Serbian school in Donji Poplat (Stolac) was established in 1868. It was one of 56 Serbian schools in Bosnia in 1891.<sup>3</sup> The new Austro-Hungarian administration did not particularly approve of these Serbian schools since they were seen as a barrier to its efforts to create new elites that would be loyal to the Dual Monarchy.

Mitrinović spent his childhood and youth, till his 20s, in Bosnia, in the period when the Habsburg Empire was making intensive efforts to modernise and Europeanise the province. Every day, Mita, as he was nicknamed, could witness cultural transfer from Europe to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the new architecture, new manners, fashion, goods and ideas. He attended and graduated from the Mostar Gymnasium (1899–1907), and that automatically included him in a small and very privileged group of Bosnians with secondary school education. The gymnasium itself had been established only five years before Mitrinović enrolled there. Even on the eve of World War One, barely 2 percent of the appropriate age group attended post-primary education in Bosnia.<sup>4</sup> The literacy rate of that age in Bosnia was very low. In 1910, after three decades of Habsburg rule, only 11% of literate persons lived in the provinces, though significant 57% of the residents of the provincial capital of Sarajevo were literate.<sup>5</sup>

His enrolment at the Mostar Gymnasium meant that he followed the same programme as other pupils in the Dual Monarchy. But since his teachers were both incomers from other parts of the Monarchy and locals, it also meant that he received the programme with local adaptations. In that way, the European cultural transfer, which reached its peak in Bosnia during the Austro-Hungarian administration (1878–1918), shaped young Dimitrije. One of the typical issues of gymnasia in the Monarchy was that Latin and Ancient Greek featured heavily in their curriculum. The same practice was transferred to Bosnian gymnasia, but unlike other provinces in the Habsburg Monarchy, it produced no local debates and opposition.<sup>6</sup>

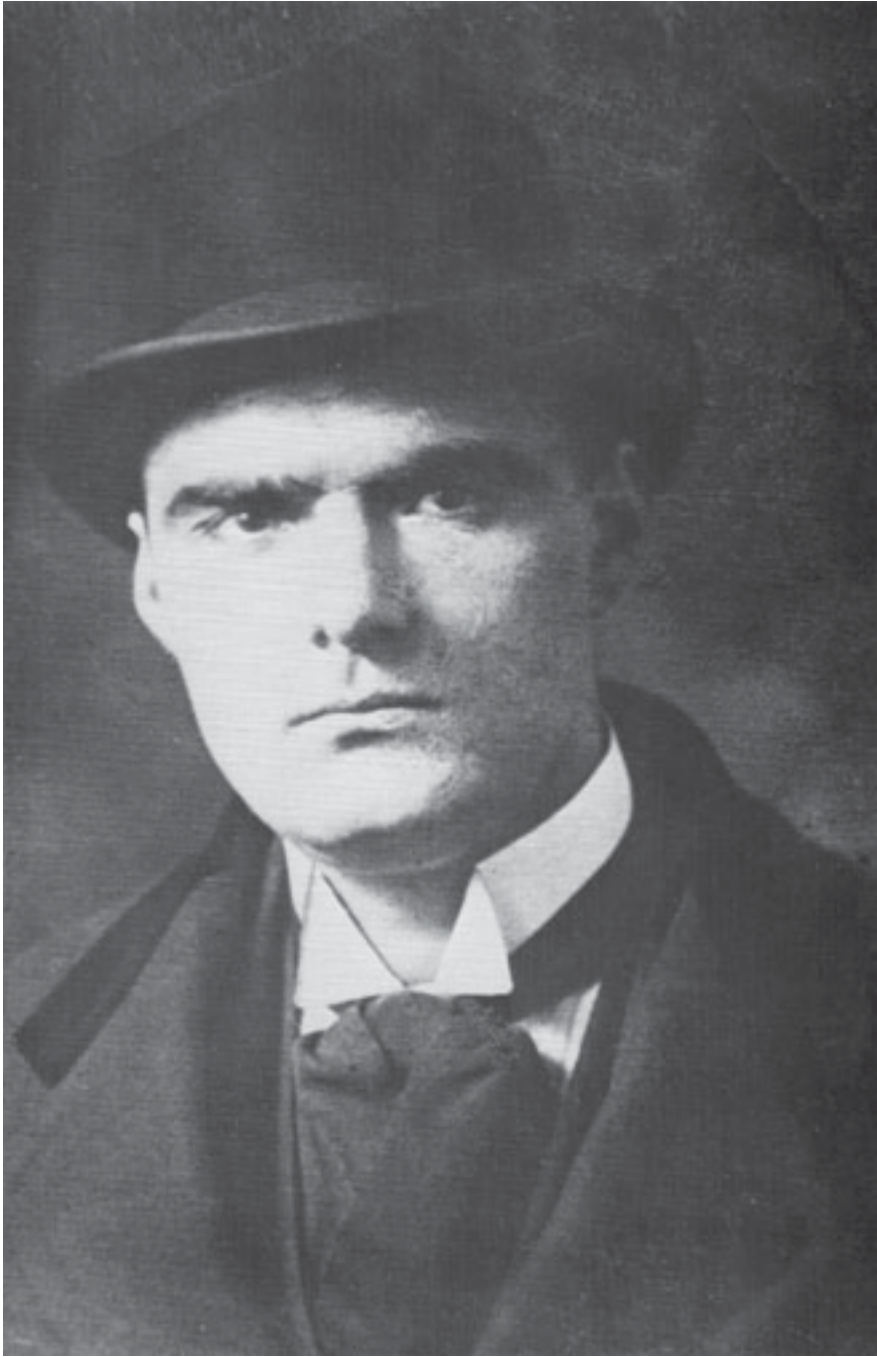
2 Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2003), 6–7.

3 Mitar Papić, *Istorija srpskih škola u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1978), 45, 133.

4 Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism. The Habsburg 'Civilising Mission' in Bosnia, 1878–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 124, 193.

5 Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism*, 220.

6 *Ibid.*, 194.



*Dimitrije Mitrinovic, a photo from his youth*

In the absence of local persons with university degrees, gymnasias became places of intensive intellectual life. At some point, a loosely connected group of literary circles consisting of secondary school pupils and young activists emerged in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It became known by its subsequent appellation “Young Bosnia”.<sup>7</sup> It was heavily inspired by similar movements in Europe, particularly by “Giovine Italia” and “Young Croatia”. The group endeavoured to overcome local animosities that were fostered by Austria-Hungary between the three confessions in the province: Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Catholic Christians. The movement facilitated the third emerging nationalism that attempted to connect different South Slavic ethnicities in Bosnia. Proponents of this type of nationalism considered themselves “Serbo-Croats” or “Yugoslavs”. Mitrinovic not only identified with this group but soon became their ideologue of sorts. Paradoxically, Austro-Hungarian efforts to improve the level of education in Bosnia meant that the inhabitants of Bosnia through cultural transfer also received nationalism. In its local adaptations, it was fused with local ethnic identities.

An explosive atmosphere enveloped parts of the Bosnian youth after the Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Dual Monarchy in 1908. Under such conditions, literary associations were just an allowed way for the growingly bitter and radicalised youth to express their political views through literary gatherings and works that usually included political allusions and implications. “Young Bosnians” were under the strong influence of Chernishevsky’s novel *What is to be done?*, Mazzini’s revolutionary and political action and the teachings of Thomas Masaryk.<sup>8</sup> They also demonstrated a clear ambition to be up-to-date in terms of European and even American contemporary literature. Mita Mitrinovic was one of the key persons who endorsed the idea that young revolutionaries and poets had to closely follow literary, philosophical and cultural European trends.

On the eve of the Great War, *Bosanska Vila*, the literary journal in which Mitrinovic was particularly active in 1908–1913, published translations of Kierkegaard, Strindberg, Ibsen, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde, usually on his own initiative.<sup>9</sup> It was during his association with *Bosanska Vila* that Mitrinovic realised that the national criterion could not be a criterion for assessing universal literary value.<sup>10</sup> He claimed:

7 For more details see Chapter 10 in Vladimir Dedijer’s *The Road to Sarajevo* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1966]), 175–234.

8 Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, 178.

9 Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, 230.

10 Predrag Palavestra, “Young Bosnia: Literary Action 1908–1914”, *Balkanica*, Vol. 41 (2010), 162.



*Title page of Bosanska Vila from July 1908 with Dimitrije Mitrinovic's article entitled "National Ground and Modernity"*

We can modernize and cultivate ourselves and yet, thank God, remain alive and well; our literature can open to a strong influence of modern Western literatures, and yet remain our, Serbian, literature; a work can bear a full imprint of the individuality of the people in whose midst it has originated and yet be perfectly modern. [...] Our epoch is marked by individualism and liberalism, this is the age of craving the vigour and fullness of one's own individual life, our art is essentially the art of self, personality, subjectivity.<sup>11</sup>

Having completed the Mostar Gymnasium in 1907, he enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zagreb. Mitrinovic was still in Zagreb in 1908, but occasionally he attended lectures of philosopher Branislav Petronijević in Belgrade, and in 1909 he attended simultaneously lectures in Zagreb and Vienna. It seems plausible that Dr Albert Bazala (1877–1947), an associate professor at the University of Zagreb since 1909, made a special impression on him.<sup>12</sup> It was the period when Bazala was working on his history of philosophy from ancient Greece to

11 Quoted in Predrag Palevestra, "Young Bosnia: Literary Action 1908–1914", 163. Originally published in: Dimitrije Mitrinović, "Nacionalno tlo i modernost", *Bosanska Vila*, Vol. 23 (1908), No. 19, 289–290; No. 20, 305–307.  
12 Cf. Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića. Počeci srpske književne avangarde* (Belgrade: Slovo ljubve, 1977), 21.

Kant. Mitrinović's interest in some ancient Greek and Roman philosophers (Aristotle and Marcus Aurelius) was probably further encouraged through the impact of Bazala, who was also a disciple of Wilhelm Wundt and may have influenced his life-long interest in psychology as well. Again, his experience from the Mostar gymnasium was the foundation for his further interests.

At the beginning of 1910, he joined the editorial board of *Bosanska Vila*, the leading Serbian literary journal in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and he also played an important role in establishing the journal of Serbian students in Vienna *Žora* published in 1910–12. This signalled his focus on national issues in the period 1909–10 and his involvement with Serbian and Serbo-Croat/Yugoslav nationalisms. This did not help his university studies. He seemed not to have been particularly concentrated on completing any of these studies and indeed never received any degree from Zagreb or Vienna.<sup>13</sup>

Mitrinović's experience from Mostar, Sarajevo, Belgrade and Zagreb demonstrates that even in European peripheries, the cultural transfer of ideas, artistic and literary styles and ideologies spread as easily as in major European capitals. Even before he moved to two major cultural centres of Europe, Rome (in 1911) and Munich (in 1913), he was already very well informed about the main currents of the European avantgarde of that age and even able to encourage some Serbian and Croatian poets to accept a more modern European literary expression. If concentration and accumulation of cultural transfers can be understood as a "transcultural history of Europe and ultimately as Europeanization", then Mitrinović was in the epicentre of this process from his gymnasium days.<sup>14</sup>

### Influence of Futurism and Expressionism

The Rome period (early 1911–January 1913) certainly enabled Mitrinović to become fully acquainted with the futurist movement. Although he was officially in Rome to promote the Serbian pavilion at the International Exhibition of Fine Arts in Rome (Esposizione internazionale di Belle Arti), his stay signalled his shift from national to universalist topics. His activities in Italy are still insufficiently known, but his comprehensive

13 Predrag Palavestra, "Sudbina i delo Dimitrija Mitrinovića", in Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Sabrana djela* [Collected Works] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991), vol. 1, 28–31.

14 Wolfgang Schmale, "Cultural Transfer", in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2012-12-05. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/schmalew-2012-en> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-2012120501 [2022-10-01].

essay “Aesthetic Contemplations” demonstrates a clear impact of futurism.<sup>15</sup> His interest in Indian religious philosophy, Buddhism, Renaissance humanistic and hermetic teachings emerged during his stay in Italy. This was the beginning of his life-long search for gnosis. In addition to Rome, he visited Florence and Venice and may have been in contact with Giovanni Papini.<sup>16</sup> Futurist dynamism can easily be detected in the lines of “Aesthetic Contemplations”.

His Munich period (January 1913–spring 1914) was equally decisive. He came there to study art under the supervision of the well-known Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945). Two men he met during his stay in Germany exerted substantial influence on him: the artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and the esoteric and the Gnostic philosopher Eric Gutkind (1877–1965). It was during his Munich/German period that he conceptualised his idea of an international yearbook of leading intellectuals who could transform the world through their ideas. From this period on, he believed that culture could play a major role in the transformation and humanisation of mankind.

The Munich period also meant a U-turn in his political and cultural focus. He abandoned his national programme and became a rather devoted cosmopolitan. This does not mean that he abandoned the Yugoslav idea, but since that period, he considered this idea only as a building block for the main cosmopolitan edifice.<sup>17</sup> His identity shift was an extraordinary event since Serbian nationalism in the Kingdom of Serbia did not reach the stage of mass nationalism until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, his alienation from nationalism happened in the period when intellectual and other elites among his compatriots subscribed to it unconditionally and *en masse*.

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15 “Aesthetic Contemplations” was originally published in *Bosanska Vila* in nine instalments between February and October 1913. The essay was fully republished in Dimitrije Mitrović, *Sabrana djela*, ed. by P. Palavestra (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991), vol. 2, 91–138. An English translation of the essay was published in 1987, but in abridged form: H. C. Rutherford (ed.), *Certainly, Future. Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrović* (Boulder CO: East European Monographs, 1987), 17–43. Palavestra warned that the English translation was published “without remarks about severe abridgments and parts that were omitted.” P. Palavestra, “Komentari” [Commentaries], in *Sabrana djela*, vol. 2, 265.

16 Predrag Palavestra, “Sudbina i delo Dimitrija Mitrovića“, in Dimitrije Mitrović, *Sabrana djela* [Collected Works] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991), vol. 1, 44, 50–51.

17 On the change of his identity from national to cosmopolitan see: Slobodan G. Markovich, “Dimitrije Mitrović in the Quest for Gnosis: from National to Cosmopolitan Identity“, *Književna istorija*, Vol. 52, No. 171 (2020), 101–122.

18 Slobodan G. Markovich, “Patterns of National Identity Development among the Balkan Orthodox Christians during the Nineteenth Century“, *Balkanica*, Vol. 44 (2013), 246–250.

## Impact of the Forte Kreis

Recent work by Guido Van Hengel<sup>19</sup> demonstrated the debt that Mitrinovic owed to the intellectual circle Forte Kreis, which included Henri Borel, Poul Bjerre, Martin Buber, Frederik Van Eeden, Eric(h) Gutkind, Gustav Landauer, Walther Rathenau and Florens Christian Rang, who met in Potsdam in June 1914. They viewed themselves as the spiritual elite meant to “accelerate the realization of a New Man”. In addition to Eric Gutkind, he was also deeply inspired by the second founder of this circle: Frederik Van Eeden (1860–1932). As Van Hengel shows in his article in this collection, Van Eeden influenced Mitrinovic’s vision of his movement in Britain and some of his concepts. Among other things, the Forte Kreis was able to teach some of its initial members the importance of dialogue, and Mitrinovic realised the same. He held the concept of “the Kingly of Spirit” in high esteem. Unsurprisingly, when the New Europe Group was established, it reprinted in the 1930s Van Eeden’s essay in a special pamphlet entitled “World-Senate. Unite in Heroic Love! Testament to the Kingly of Spirit”.<sup>20</sup>

The text originally published in 1911 includes the following observation of Van Eeden:

Never until today was the possibility given, never was the attempt made, to form a union of some amongst the few, a band of free, kingly spirits, wherein the water of the new fountain continued to flow, wherein the fire of the new truth was not extinguished.

This appears to be the right moment. Lack of success would prove the attempt had come to soon...

It is neither pride nor vanity nor arrogance to declare that one belongs to the Kingly of Spirit.

In Van Eeden’s view, the Kingly of Spirit had to unite “else will the new Word not be born.” He concluded that human purpose was unity, but the question was how to achieve it. Groups made through instinct and fear did not work. “But the noble ones of the earth unite through love and insight, through trust and reason. Only this unity is lasting and universal.”<sup>21</sup>

19 Guido van Hengel, *De zieners* (Amsterdam: Ambo/Anthos, 2018), 27-42; Serbo-Croat translation: Idem, *Vidovnjaci* (Belgrade: Clio, 2020).

20 Frederik Van Eeden, “World-Senate. Unite in Heroic Love! Testament to the Kingly of Spirit” (London: Nova Atlantis Publishing Co., s.d.). The pamphlet includes the following remark: “publication for members of the New Europe Group”.

21 Frederik Van Eeden, “World-Senate. Unite in Heroic Love! Testament to the Kingly of Spirit”.



What Mitrinovic gradually developed as his lifelong project was the creation of this World Senate with “the Kingly of Spirit”. During the Great War, he realised that he should endeavour to do this in London rather than in continental Europe. Two of his compatriots helped him realise this.

### With Extraordinary Cosmopolitan Compatriots in Britain

Mitrinovic spent the First World War in Britain where he witnessed something very peculiar. Prior to the war, hardly any Serbs or Croats were widely known in Britain. During the war, however, two of his friends became huge celebrities in the Isles: the Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962) and the Serbian Orthodox priest and preacher Father Nikolai Velimirovich (1881–1956). Meštrović was a child of peasants from Dalmatia, “the son of agriculturalists and shepherds”,<sup>22</sup> as his greatest Yugoslav promoter called him. Nikolai Velimirovich was also born to a peasant family from the village of Lelić in western Serbia. By the beginning of the First World War, Meštrović was already a well-known artist in Austria-Hungary, Serbia and Central Europe. Father Nikolai, by that time, already had two doctoral degrees from the Old Catholic University in Bern and a reputation as a surprisingly influential preacher in Serbia.

The three men were also close in age: Mitrinovic in his late 20s, Velimirovich and Meštrović in their early 30s. At some point, all the three of them became associated with the Yugoslav and Serbian colonies in London. Mitrinovic briefly worked for the Serbian Legation in London and continued to occasionally receive some support from the Legation. Meštrović was financed and supported by the Kingdom of Serbia during the war, and Father Nikolai was officially sent in May 1915 by the Prime Minister of Serbia to promote Serbia and the future Yugoslav state among Yugoslavs in the USA and also to support Serbian and Yugoslav causes in Britain.<sup>23</sup> What the three men also shared was their conviction that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes should form a single state after the war. They were all determined Yugoslavs.

At the same time, all three persons had surprisingly syncretic, universalist and cosmopolitan ideas. Meštrović saw art as totally universal: Christian, Buddhist or Assyrian at the same time. His model of the Ko-

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22 Milan Ćurčin, “O poreklu o detinjstvu Ivana Meštrovića“, in *Ivan Meštrović* (Zagreb: Nova Evropa, 1932), 10.

23 For more on this see Slobodan G. Markovich, “Activities of Father Nikolai Velimirovich in Great Britain during the Great War”, *Balkanica*, Vol. 48 (2017), 143–190.

ssovo Temple, fragments of which were exhibited in Rome in 1911, was Serbian, Yugoslav and universalist at once. Although he made the model of the Temple in 1912 to symbolise Serbo-Croat and Yugoslav unity, it also had a universalist message. His universalism only grew in time.<sup>24</sup> He later explained his transformation after the Balkan Wars (1912/13) and during the Great War: “It appeared to me that the ideals of a nation, its victories and sacrifices are too small an achievement in comparison with the real sacrifices, victories and ideals of all.”<sup>25</sup> Velimirovich demonstrated his own attraction to syncretism when, in 1911, he wrote his book *The Religion of Nyegosh*.<sup>26</sup> In the book, he described this Montenegrin Prince-Bishop and Serbian poet as a religious syncretist who was rather far from Orthodox Christian canons. He did not reject him for that reason, but demonstrated huge sympathies for what he called “Nyegosh’s religion”.

What Mitrinovic witnessed in London in 1915–18 was a meteoric rise in the popularity and celebrity of both Meštrović and Velimirovich. The works of Meštrović were exhibited in London even before the Great War, in 1906 at Earl’s Court, and again in 1913. His full breakthrough, however, happened with his exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in June 1915. Suffice it to say that the exhibition’s Honorary Committee included Earl Curzon as its president and a religious and political selection of *Who is Who* of Britain as its members.<sup>27</sup> The exhibition was heavily promoted in official and semi-official British circles, and Meštrović became a celebrity in Britain and was described as “Serbia’s Rodin”.<sup>28</sup> Mitrinović wrote a series of articles on Meštrović for Serbian, Croatian and Czech journals in 1910–1914, and he decided to self-appoint himself as the curator of the London exhibition.

Velimirovich became known to the wider public in London and Britain thanks to the sermons that he delivered at St. Margaret’s Church (Westminster) in March and April 1916.<sup>29</sup> His meteoric rise was facili-

24 Slobodan G. Markovich, “Yugoslav Freemasonry and Yugoslavism as a Civil Religion”, in Idem (ed.), *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* (Belgrade: IES and Zepeter Book World, 2020), 155–163.

25 [Ivan Mestrovic], “Ivan Mestrovic on his Exhibition in America”, *The Yugoslav Review* [New York], vol. III, No. 2 (Jan. 1925), 15.

26 Nik. Velimirović, *Religija Njegoševa* (Belgrade: Printing Press St. Sava, 1911).

27 *Exhibition of the Works of Ivan Meštrović* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1915).

28 “Serbia’s Rodin”, *Daily Chronicle*, June 19, 1915; “Serbia’s Splendid Gift to London”, *The Illustrated London News*, Sep. 4, 1915.

29 Rev. father Nicolai Velimirovic, *The Religious Spirit of the Slavs. Three lectures given in Lent, 1916. Sermons on subjects suggested by the war. Third series. St. Margaret’s Westminster* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1916), 40 p.



*Cover page of the London Illustrated News of September 04, 1915, with the story "Serbia's Splendid Gift to London"*

tated by the Anglo-Catholic line of the Church of England. Propagators of that line were in a decade-long search to find a proper mediator with Eastern Orthodox churches, and some of them saw in Father Nikolai a perfect candidate to be the bridge with the Orthodox East. On July 23, 1917, he even had the rare opportunity to deliver a sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral.<sup>30</sup> The impression that Velimirovich made on his British audience in 1916–1918 was summarised in *New Europe* “During the dark days of war and exile no one did more to interpret to this country the soul of Serbia and the spirit of the Orthodox Church than Father Nikolai Velimirovic.”<sup>31</sup>

All of this must have been fascinating for Mitrinović to observe. Two cosmopolitan compatriots, both from humble rural backgrounds, were welcomed and endorsed by the highest British circles. Velimirovich even had an audience with King George V in December 1919 and also delivered his second sermon at St Paul's on December 18, 1919. As an eyewitness and even participant in some of their accomplishments, Mitrinovic must have reflected on what made them so popular in Britain. It was certainly their religious openness and also the fact that they seemed to be acting as human bridges between British and Central and Eastern European cultures. With his links with Central Europe and Slavic countries, could he not himself be another bridge of that kind?

Unsurprisingly, some of Mitrinovic's first contacts in Britain were the same as Father Nikolai's. He got acquainted with Anglican priests interested in Eastern Orthodoxy and with journalists and publicists intrigued by Eastern Europe and Russia. These trajectories led both of them to Alfred Richard Orage (1873–1934) and his avantgarde journal *The New Age*, a rare periodical genuinely interested in Russia and Eastern Europe. Both wrote under pseudonyms for this journal: Father Nikolai as R. A. Vran-Gavran in 1918 and Mitrinovic as M. M. Cosmoi in 1920–21. What the peculiar and successful wartime life stories in Britain of Ivan Meštrović and Father Nikolai demonstrated to Mitrinovic was that London was probably the best place in Europe to find associates and followers for some of his ideas. In cosmopolitan London, he could try to create a group that could culturally change the world. This was apparently his plan. The failure of the Forte Kreis and his Yearbook had made him desperate, but the success stories of Meštrović and Father Nikolai suggested to him other opportunities.

30 Father Nicholas Velimirovic, D.D., “The Sacrifices of Nations. A sermon preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, on the seventh Sunday after Trinity”, *Church Times*, 27 July 1917.

31 *New Europe* (Jan. 1, 1920).

## Bearers and Prophets of Revelation

In 1914, Mitrinovic escaped to London from continental Europe. He stayed in Britain till the end of his life in 1953. To his friends in Britain, he became known under a shortened version of his name – Dimitri. As a pacifist, he was destined to lead a secluded life during the war. That provided him with the perfect opportunity to construct his own syncretic philosophy, the foundations of which had already been elaborated in “Aesthetic Contemplations”. Again, he sailed against the tide of his age. In war-torn Britain, when the government concentrated all its efforts on promoting the military efforts of the United Kingdom, Mitrinovic tried to bring together like-minded cosmopolitans and pacifists who would be able to discuss a future post-war and pacifist Europe.<sup>32</sup> What made this task even more peculiar was that Mitrinovic was occasionally associated with the Serbian Legation in London and therefore obliged to follow the war efforts of his adopted country, in other words, the Kingdom of Serbia. In the period when all Serbian and Yugoslav exiles in London were focused on the promotion of the national aims of Serbia and future Yugoslavia, his plans were much more ambitious and focused on future Europe and mankind.

In his various texts, Dimitri Mitrinovic made reference to those who were prophets and bearers of revelations. In 1921, in his famous “World Affairs”, signed by his pseudonym M. M. Cosmoi, he identified the following authors as prophets: Friedrich Nietzsche, “a prophet of the Seraphimic of Seraphic dispensation of the world”; Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), who “glorified Humanity Universal and the eternal Christness of Man” and who was the “first woman genius known to history”; Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), “the last of the fathers of Christendom and the prophet of the Sophian Christianity”;<sup>33</sup> and Eric Gutkind, “the name of the Superman of our own hour”. In addition to them, he held Fyodor Dostoevsky and Walt Whitman in high esteem.<sup>34</sup>

Later, one of his followers took notes from his various talks and compiled one of his lectures entitled “Three revelations”. For Mitrinovic, the first revelation was pre-Christian, and its modern exponent was Rudolf Steiner. It dealt with the archetypal man. The second Christian revelation Mitrinovic mostly took from Vladimir Solovyov and it dealt with the

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32 See, for instance, a report from his first meeting with Patrick Geddes, and their discussion that probably took place in 1916. His pacifism shocked even a very open-minded man like Geddes. Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and other Papers* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), 92-93.

33 *The New Age* (June 21, 1921).

34 *Ibid.*

“archetypal Man in history.” Finally, the third revelation was post-Christian: “the revelation of Genius and of the cosmic rebirth of individuals”, which Mitrinovic took from Eric Gutkind.<sup>35</sup>

Revelations	Type of man	Main author(s)	Basis of the three Triune systems of philosophy
Pre-Christian Revelation	Archetypal man of ancient traditions immanent in creation	Rudolf Steiner and H. P. Blavatsky	The Vedanta Plato <sup>36</sup> Hegel
Christian Revelation	Archetypal man in history	Vladimir Solovyov (Auguste Comte as forerunner)	
Post-Christian Revelation	Archetypal man in individual consciousness	Erich Gutkind	

From the list of prophets and bearers of revelation, one sees various elements that made a huge impact on Mitrinovic: theosophy, Russian theological literature, modern French and German philosophy, Russian and European literature, and the Forte Kreis. What he fused during his early London years (1914–1920) was to a very large degree a synthesis of those authors, who were very popular among Young Bosnians, and of the authors he came across during his Rome (1911–1913), Munich (1913–1914) and early London (1914–1920) periods. His concepts were the result of serious introspection and the personal crises he encountered in 1917–1919. In this personal quest, as his close associates confirmed, he experienced at some point a “mysterious illness”<sup>37</sup> and was on the brink of committing suicide.<sup>38</sup> Researchers today can analyse the result of these introspections and crises by reading the section “World Affairs” in *The New Age* for the period August 1920 to October 1921.<sup>39</sup> There is a clear attempt of the author(s) to synthesise various philosophical teachings and

35 Dimitrije Mitrinovic, “The Three Revelations”, in H. C. Rutherford (ed.), *Certainly Future, Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrinovic* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1987), 439.

36 This chart is based on notes taken by Mitrinovic’s disciple Winifred Gordon Frazer who compiled from her notes Mitrinovic’s lecture “The Three Revelations”. Dimitrije Mitrinovic, “The Three Revelations”, in H. C. Rutherford (ed.), *Certainly Future, Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrinovic* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1987), 439–445.

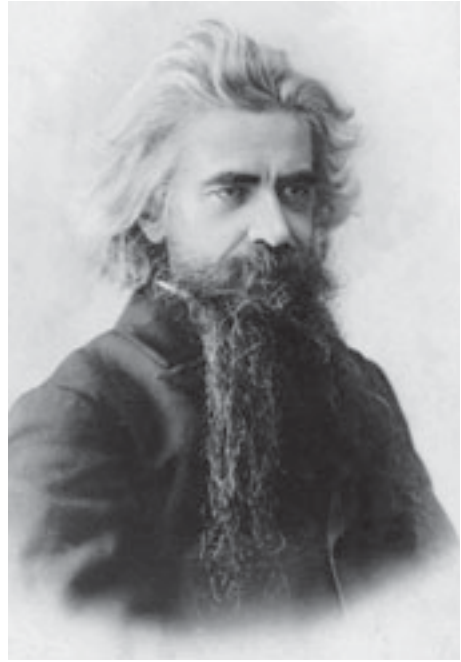
37 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and other Papers* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), 129.

38 Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene. An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1964), 251.

39 Early articles were co-written by A. R. Orage and D. Mitrinovic till the end of 1920, and then were written by Mitrinovic only.



*Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891)*



*Vladimir Solovyov/Soloviev (1853-1900)*



*Alfred Adler (1870-1937)*



*Eric(h) Gutkind (1877-1965)*

religious traditions, but also a peculiar blend of a personal esoteric quest and social activism, something that A. R. Orage and Mitrinovic shared.

The cultural transfer of Theosophy and the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky had different receptions in different cultural milieus. These teachings were not racist. George L. Mosse notices that “indeed, it was the first European movement to tell the Indians that their religions were superior to Christianity.” The problem is that racism later “allied with Theosophy”. This was the case with some authors in Germany and Austria.

Particularly universalistic was Anthroposophy. Its teachings were formulated by Rudolf Steiner, a keen student of Theosophy, who “linked spiritualism to freedom and universalism.”<sup>40</sup> The highest position that Mitrinovic attributed to Steiner’s teachings ranks him among universalists even in the reception of Theosophy and, particularly, of Anthroposophy. Steiner was one of the most hated persons in the early years of the National-Socialist movement. However, Mitrinovic could not be, and was not, totally immune to the ethnic, cultural, and racial stereotypes of his age.

### Influence of psychology as “modern gnosis”

Mitrinovic was throughout his life under the very strong influence of various psychological teachings, which he very carefully followed. After all, the first activity that he publicly performed in Britain was his co-ordination of the British branch of the International Society for Individual Psychology, and that was the name of the society of Alfred Adler’s followers.

This society was active in London between March 1927 and 1932 when it was disbanded due to disagreements with its founder, Alfred Adler, about the social and political aspects of individual psychology. Mitrinovic and some of his associates wanted to discuss and develop the potentials of individual psychology and other forms of psychology for social reforms. That was precisely the thing that Alfred Adler was afraid of since he wanted to avoid any connection of his school with political ideologies. The sociological group of the society’s British branch was inclined to view phenomena as psychological and social at the same time, but the medical part of the society was mainly interested in narrower medical aspects.<sup>41</sup>

Even his association with A. R. Orage had at least two important common grounds: their shared interest in esotericism and their interest

40 George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution. A history of European racism* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1978), 96.

41 For more details on Mitrinovic’s association with the Adler Society see Andrew Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović. A Biography*, 83–98.



**LECTURES AND MEETINGS.**

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**EAST ANGLIAN INSTITUTE of  
AGRICULTURE, CHELMSFORD.**

A LECTURE will be given at the Institute on Monday, November 12th, at 7 p.m., by Prof. F. W. Oliver, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S., University College, London, and J. Bryce, B.Sc., and F. Knowles, F.I.C., of the East Anglian Institute of Agriculture, on "THE GROWTH OF SPARTINA TOWNSENDII FOR THE PROTECTION OF SEAWALLS AND FOR THE FEEDING OF YOUNG STOCK."

Chairman: NORMAN ANGELL, Esq.  
ALL INTERESTED ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

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**"THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE."** Free lecture on Saturday, November 10th, at 3.15 p.m., at 26, West Kensington-gardens, W.14 (beside Olympia).—For full syllabus apply Secretary, at above address.

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**THE ADLER SOCIETY. M. MITRINOVIC** on "FREUD v. ADLER," Tuesday, 8.30, at 55, Gower-street. Admission 2s. 6d.

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**UNITED LODGE OF THEOSOPHISTS,**  
62, Baker-street, W.1.  
Public Lecture To-morrow (Sunday), 8.15 p.m.  
"LIFE AFTER DEATH."  
Study class every Wednesday at 8.15 p.m. "An Epitome of Theosophy," by W. Q. Judge. Rooms open every weekday, 2.30-5.30.

*Announcement of Mitrinovic's lecture "Freud v. Adler" in the Adler Society in London. The Times, 11.10.1928, p. 10 e*

in psychoanalysis and related disciplines. Speaking of his favourite London bookshop, and its owner Nigel Watkins, Alan Watts noticed that he was not only his bibliographer on religion and mysticism "but also my most trusted advisor on the various gurus, pandits, and psychotherapists then flourishing in London."<sup>42</sup> Psychotherapists and gurus were obviously mentioned in inter-war London under the same category.

Mitrinovic's interests were not confined to Adler but also included the teachings of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. One can reconstruct the impact that psychology made on Mitrinovic through his contributions published in the *Purpose* magazine in June, September and December 1929. He noticed that, through science, man was confronted with the eternal questions of death, pain, love, but also with the following questions: "why he should live, what is the soul that it desires happiness? That is the question that is being asked by all psychologists and all investigating

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<sup>42</sup> Alan Watts, *In my Own Way. An Autobiography 1915-1965* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 107.

scientists in the world.”<sup>43</sup> Therefore, for him, Freud’s psychoanalysis and Adler’s individual psychology were forms of modern gnosis that prompted these questions. Freud, in his opinion, shook the Christian world and Europe, but the emergence of Adler was a new turning point since God for Adler was justice. “In order to reconstitute our civilization, which has been softened by pessimism and pride, Adler has come to redress the balance of Freud and teach us optimism and humility.”<sup>44</sup> Finally, Jung became very dear to Dimitri Mitrinovic due to his interest in cultural issues. He interpreted the meaning of his science as a synthesis that implies that humans should worship with passion, innocence and grace, their eternal Father and eternal Mother, knowing that happiness is in “complete union with this Father and Mother.” Worshiping thus with happiness “then there shall be no moral law above you, and you – mankind – you Western Culture – you can build laws as you like – released from fear of any dark God whatsoever. This is the message of Jung to mankind.”<sup>45</sup>

Although, in the late 1920s, Mitrinovic was definitely close to the idea that the “modern gnosis” of Adler and Jung offered huge potentials to mankind, he softened his enthusiasm after his parting with Adler, which led to the gradual dismantling of the Adler Society in London in the period 1931–33. This encouraged him to realise the limitations of the psychological approach in dealing with social phenomena. In May 1933, he began writing his World Affairs rubric again and, in one of these contributions, noticed that psychoanalysis and individual psychology were “not able to infuse some humanness and some cognizance of the actual psychic reality of mankind into the irresponsible and unstoppable leadership, the deadening and impersonal leadership of Science.”<sup>46</sup>

### The New Europe Group and the New Britain Movement

His experiments to fuse psychology, introspection and some esoteric teachings with social activism turned out to be limited in scope. When it became obvious that the Adler Society was about to disappear, he started another initiative. His interest in psychology remained life-long, but his

43 Dimitrije Mitrinovic, “Freud versus Adler. Psycho-analysis versus psycho-synthesis”, in H. C. Rutherford (ed.), *Certainly, Future. Selected Writings of Dimitrije Mitrinovic*, 328. Originally published in *Purpose*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (April – June 1929).

44 *Ibid*, 329.

45 Dimitrije Mitrinovic, “The Significance of Jung”, in H. C. Rutherford (ed.), *Certainly, Future*, 339. Originally published in *Purpose*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July–Sep. 1929).

46 “World Affairs”, *New Britain*, May 31, 1933.



New Britain, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 24, 1933

social activism now became even wider and reached its climax in the period 1932–34.

The New Britain movement was closest to a sort of political movement. It was based on two journals that Dimitri Mitrinovic initiated: *The New Britain Quarterly* (1932–33) and *The New Britain Weekly* (May 1933 – Autumn 1934). The *New Britain* started to have followers all around the United Kingdom, but Mitrinovic encouraged his closest associates to prevent the transformation of this initiative into a real movement. Alan Watts described the New Britain as a movement based on four principles designed to change social order. The first was the concept of social credit explained by Major Douglas, the second was guild socialism with workers as stockholders in the companies employing them, the third was the application of Rudolf Steiner's concept of the Threefold State, which would include three assemblies (political, economic, and cultural), and the fourth was the campaign for an immediate federation of all nations of Europe.<sup>47</sup>

47 Alan Watts, *In my Own Way*, 112–113.

Although the movement had the potential to become a politically relevant force in Britain, Mitrinovic decided to withdraw his support. Since his early London years, he was afraid that his ideas could be watered down in practice. Instead of being the leader of a political party or movement with all the compromises this would request, he preferred to be a kind of spiritual guide and teacher of 30–40 followers, who he tried to teach how to become world senators or the Kingly of Spirit in Van Eeden’s terms.<sup>48</sup> The message that he tried to convey was mostly based on the teachings of those he had previously identified as modern bearers and prophets of revelation. This group took his teachings very seriously, as Andrew Rigby confirmed many years later when he interviewed members of the New Atlantis Foundation (NAF) and some of those interviews are included in his article in this collection.

Luisa Passerini noticed that Mitrinovic was “excessively optimistic about the capacity to influence people and combine political visions. For him, syncretism was a way of life, not limited to his political positions.” He was also able to bring together rather different persons, and also to keep them “co-operating harmoniously at various levels of participation.”<sup>49</sup> He showed this peculiar capacity through the New Europe Group, the most stable of his initiatives from the 1930s. It was established in 1931 and lasted till 1957 with the aim of promoting a European federation. The list of the presidents of NEG includes very distinguished names. The first president was the town planner Sir Patrick Geddes (1931–32). He was followed by the engineer and monetary reformer Arthur Kitson (1859–1937) and the radiochemist and polymath Frederick Soddy (1877–1956), a Nobel Prize laureate for Chemistry in 1921. At some point, the president was also Samuel George Hobson (1870–1940), the author of *National Guilds* (1910), who called Mitrinovic “the presiding genius” of the whole project.<sup>50</sup> In addition to all the European thinkers that he was fascinated with, all the presidents of NEG also contributed their ideas to the various initiatives of Mitrinovic.

His clear goal to bring together political and personal opponents and reconcile their views has puzzled scholars and made it difficult for them to identify the most essential political views of Mitrinovic. They obviously included an ambition to reconcile even political extremes from the Left

48 About his plans to create a Senate see Andrew Rigby, “Training for Cosmopolitan Citizenship in the 1930s: The Project of Dimitrije Mitrinovic”, *Peace and Change*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (July 1999), 387–389.

49 Luisa Passerini, *Europe on Love, Love in Europe. Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 132–33, 141.

50 *Ibid.*, 133–37.

and the Right. Therefore, Mitrinovic could be accused of being overambitious in his zeal to reconcile extremes and in his conviction that he was indeed capable of such a feat rather than of his own advocacy of either of the extreme political poles.

This was clearly defined in the aims of the New Atlantis Foundation, which was formed after the death of Dimitrije Mitrinovic. In their summary of Dimitri's teachings, they have attempted to give an answer to what is an inclusive attitude of mind "which does not take side in conflicts between the major world elements." The pamphlet claims that Mitrinovic rejected "either-or" reasoning and dismissed traditional laws of thought defined by Plato and Aristotle. He instead offered "the third force" that goes "above, between and beyond the extremes and opposites." Instead of accepting any of the three revelations (cosmic, individualistic, and universal), humans have a fourth approach: "to accept the equi-validity of all three revelations simultaneously."<sup>51</sup>

The "ABC of Mitrinovic's thought" was created between 1899 and the late 1920s. Himself a product of accelerated Europeanisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and dynamism of the 1910s in European culture, Mitrinovic finally formatted his concepts during his association with the Adler Society. From 1920 as a journalist and from 1927 also as a social activist, Mitrinovic attempted to Europeanise Britain. As H. C. Rutherford put it, one of the aims of the New Europe group was to bring "the continent of Europe more actively into the consciousness of the insular British."<sup>52</sup> In this way, a man who was himself an object of Europeanisation during his gymnasium and student years became an agent of Europeanisation in the Isles.

### Impact of Mitrinovic on Yugoslav Inter-war and Post-war Cultures

Mitrinovic was considered one of the canonisers of the Young Bosnia movement. The aim of this movement was the creation of a new state or entity where Yugoslavs, also called Serbo-Croats by the members of this movement on the eve of the Great War, would be able to form their own form of a social and state utopia. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, created on December 1, 1918, at least in ethnic and state terms, seemed as the realisation of this utopia. An intellectual of Mitrinovic's

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51 *Principles and Aims. New Atlantis Foundation* (The New Atlantis Foundation, 1981), 12, 24.

52 H. C. Rutherford, "General Introduction", in Idem (ed.), *Certainly, Future. Selected Writings of Dimitrije Mitrinovic* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1987), 9.

power could not have remained unnoticed in cultural and political circles of the new kingdom, even when he decided never to return back to his home region of Bosnia and Herzegovina or to settle in his adopted country of Serbia, now part of Yugoslavia, a bigger entity.

Who did he inspire in the new Kingdom? Were there circles and groups of his open or secret adherents in Yugoslavia in the inter-war period? In 1987, H. C. Rutherford published Mitrinovic's lecture noted down by Winifred Gordon Fraser. In this lecture, Mitrinovic is supposed to have made a reference to zenithism. His fourth principle is supposed to have consisted of zenithism and a creative critique, and it essentially referred to the following: "Let every human being be responsible for the whole world – take the Christ principle on himself. This is Zenithism."<sup>53</sup> She also wrote in the same text that the word was an English equivalent "of a Serbian word which was used by his pupils in Serbian before the first world war to describe his writings."<sup>54</sup> The time reference is probably a typo and it should have been written "after the First World War". Possible connections between the zenithists in Serbia and Mitrinovic need to be explored further. For the time being, one can only refer to Predrag Palavestra, who notices that the zenithists acknowledged their debt to Mitrinovic and some of them considered him "the first teacher of discontent."<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, Predrag Palavestra was the first to mention Mitrinovic's association with the journal *Preteča* (Forerunner), in 1928, and with the circle of the contributors of this journal in Belgrade, Serbia. The circle took a keen interest in the panhuman as elaborated by Miloš N. Djurić, another disciple of Prof. Albert Bazala, who supervised Djurić's doctoral dissertation defended in 1929. Besides Djurić, the main contributors were Dušan Stojanović, Pavle Jevtić and Vladeta Popović. All three were alumni of British universities. Mitrinovic did not publish a single contribution in the four issues of this journal. Palavestra attributed this to the death of his brother Milivoje (in 1928), who served as the intermediary between him and the Belgrade circle, and, also, to his focus shifting to the Adler Society.<sup>56</sup>

Nemanja Radulović analysed the correspondence of this circle kept in the archives of NAF and demonstrated that a circle of Mitrinovic's disciples actually existed in Belgrade in the late 1920s and that, in ad-

53 *Certainly, Future. Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrinović*, 445.

54 *Certainly, Future*, 443

55 Predrag Palavestra, "Komentari" ["Commentaries"], in Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 2, 265.

56 Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* (Belgrade: Slovo ljubve, 1977), 320-321.

dition to *Preteča*, they initiated another journal, called *Društvena Obnova* (Social Renaissance) and owned by Čedomil Mitrinović, Dimitri's brother. The circle in Belgrade was interested in spirituality, the Indian religious system, Buddhism and anthroposophy. The selection of topics suggests that Mitrinovic was very much involved in shaping the circle in one way or another. The members of the circle were even in contact and correspondence with the British followers of Dimitri Mitrinovic. Apparently, the Belgrade circle considered its own members as brethren and even devised, or at least had plans to devise, a ritual that resembled freemasonic rites.<sup>57</sup>

There was some sort of Indophilic current among some Belgrade intellectuals in the late 1920s. They basically followed what Father Nikolai outlined in his book *Discourses on Panhuman* in 1920. However, Bishop Nikolai, especially after he was sent to the Bishopric of Ohrid (1920), redirected his interest to Orthodox Christian theology and neglected the philosophy of the panhuman that he had previously elaborated. Nonetheless, he paved the way that others followed. It is enough to go through the bibliography of Miloš N. Djurić to get an impression of the Indophilic line. In 1922, he wrote on "Slavic-Indian panhumanism." He reviewed the published London PhD of Pavle Jevtić entitled "Karma and Reincarnation in Hindu Religion and Philosophy" (1927), and also Jevtić's Serbian translation of the Bhagavat Ghita (1929). Djurić wrote on the Hindu mystic Shri Ramakrishna and the Indian educationalist Sandhu Thanwardas Lilaram Vaswani and even wrote a piece entitled "Christ in the Light of Yoga Science."<sup>58</sup> The last article could also be considered a precursor to New Age philosophy in Serbia. This unusual interest in Indian culture and the Hindu religious heritage was shared by the circle of Mitrinovic's disciples in London and Richmond.

When Rabindranath Tagore visited Belgrade in 1926, the Belgrade audience proved itself very interested in his lectures, and the zenithists made a scandal on that occasion, accusing Tagore of being a "false prophet" and shouting from the balcony of the main hall of the New University "down with Tagore, long live Gandhi!"<sup>59</sup> Nemanja Radulovic notices that, in that period (the mid 1920s), "Slavic Indian messianism is detected in the circle of domestic authors close to Dimi-

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57 Nemanja Radulović, "Beogradski krug Mitrinovićevih sledbenika", online portal Stella Polare, posted on August 17, 2021: <https://stellapolarebooks.com/2021/08/17/београдски-круг-митриновићевих-след/>

58 Miloš N. Djurić, "Hristos u svetlosti joga-nauke", *Sprski književni glasnik*, Vol. 26, No. 7, pp. 5–6; No. 8, pp. 3–5 (1929).

59 See *Politika*, November 17, 1926, p. 6 a.

trije Mitrinovic.”<sup>60</sup> Indian philosophy was carefully studied among Mitrinovic’s disciples, and he obviously encouraged his followers to do that. When Predrag Palavestra published his book *Dogma and Utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinovic* (1977), it caused heated discussions and discontent among the members of the New Atlantis Foundation. Trustees of the Foundation prepared a special written reply to Palavestra in the form of a privately prepared typed monograph, in which a significant part is dedicated to the Indian notion of Loka Samgraha and how Mitrinovic understood the notion. This case demonstrates that the followers of Mitrinovic were rather well informed about the concepts of Indian religious philosophy, and it is clear that their master encouraged them to read and learn about Far Eastern religions.<sup>61</sup>

One of his Belgrade followers, Indologist Pavle Jevtić, published a very insightful essay on Mitrinovic in the Belgrade daily *Vreme*. In it he also referred to the second and last visit of Mitrinovic to Belgrade and Sarajevo after World War One in May–June 1930.

During his recent visit to Belgrade, he elaborated to a group of people his ideas on what he thought was the essence of life, on religious leaders in the past, on the mission of Yugoslavia. They listened to him attentively and with a certain curious lack of trust they endeavoured to process his thoughts. For several days, with the curiosity characteristic of school pupils, they absorbed his words and could not understand what he wanted to say. But, during the days that followed, he kept going with the same energy and gathered another group of people to whom he spoke on totally different subjects. He expected reactions, but there was nobody to contradict him. They did not see a visionary in their compatriot like his English friends, but rather a man who could not harmonise his ideas with real life. And they left him in the same way as the curious audience in Hyde Park leaves numerous speakers who recruit adherents for their religious beliefs or political moods.

60 Nemanja Radulović, “Mahatma Gandhi i srpska medjuratna inteligencija”, in Idem (ed.), *Indija i srpska književnost* (Belgrade: Foundation Dositej Obradovic, 2021), 125.

61 *Critique of the Last Chapter of Dr. Predrag Palavestra’s book Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića by the Trustees of the New Atlantis Foundation* (Ditchling: New Atlantis Foundation, 1980), 13–14. ULSM SC “Fond Dimitrije Mitrinović”. The envelope containing this typed report includes a handwritten note in Serbian that on June 18, 1980, the manuscript was personally delivered by David Shillan, one of the Trustees of the New Atlantis Foundation, to the director of the University Library in Belgrade. ULSM SC “Fonds Dimitrije Mitrinović”.





This testimony suggests that his followers in Belgrade probably tried to widen the ranks of his audience during his visits to Belgrade and Sarajevo, but that it did not work well. Jevtic's article was written eight years after Mitrinovic's visit to Yugoslavia and mentions no similar efforts after 1930. Therefore, one can conclude that the visit of Mitrinovic was expected to be a potential turning point for the spread of his ideas, but that nothing of the kind happened.

Many of the Belgrade adherents of Mitrinovic followed similar ideas developed and elaborated by Father Nikolai Velimirovich in Britain during the Great War and in Yugoslavia just after the end of the war. Seen in this light, it becomes clear that Mitrinovic's association with Father Nikolai Velimirovich and Stephen Graham during the Great War in London resulted in several important publications, although it is still not quite clear what the nature of this mutual transfer of ideas was. It is plausible to accept that Mitrinovic influenced both Graham and Father Nikolai Velimirovich, but he was certainly influenced himself by both of them, particularly by Father Nikolai. Be that as it may, Father Nikolai published a series of articles in *The New Age* in 1918 under the pseudonym R. A. Vran Gavran and, just after the war, his book *Reči o svečoveku* (Discourses on the Panhuman) was anonymously published in Belgrade.<sup>62</sup> Graham published his book *In the Quest of the Face* in 1918 and described his spiritual journey, which was based on Mitrinovic's teachings.

Father and later Bishop Nikolai had a reputation as an excellent preacher in Belgrade even before the Great War, and he attained the same fame during the war in Britain. The Belgrade circle of Mitrinovic's followers very much regretted in the 1920s that Velimirovich abandoned any further elaboration of his idea of the panhuman. Instead Miloš Djurić and other followers in Belgrade focused on the same ideas. Although Velimirovich never elaborated the concept of the panhuman any further, his book on the Panhuman has remained one of the most popular religious books in Serbia until today, and Mitrinovic's legacy in Serbia is perhaps felt more through this book than anything else.<sup>63</sup> Miloš N. Djurić is also

62 *Reči o svečoveku* (Discourses on Pan-Human] (Belgrade: S. B. Cvijanović, 1920). For more details on Father Nikolai's syncretism see Slobodan G. Markovich, "Cosmopolitanism, Ecumenism and Syncretism of Father Nikolaj Velimirović in 1915-1919", in Vladimir Cvetković and Dragan Bakić (eds.), *Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović: Old Controversies in Historical and Theological Context* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, and Los Angeles: St. Sebastian Press, 2022), 33–60.

63 After the publication of the first issue in Belgrade in 1920, the next edition of *Reči o svečoveku* was published in Serbia in 1988, with four more editions till the end of the century. In the period 2002–2016, at least ten new editions of the book were published in Serbia. The best overview of the evolution of Velimirovich's ideas and controversies from the later periods of his life is given in: Zoran Milutinović, *Getting Over Europe: The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2011), 147–180.



*Cover page of the thematic issue of the Belgrade journal Delo (Sep.-Oct. 1988) dedicated to Jungian psychology and Dimitrije Mitrinovic*

held in very high esteem and had a very distinguished career as a classical scholar in Belgrade after World War Two.<sup>64</sup>

The rediscovery of Mitrinovic in Serbia and Yugoslavia prompted by Predrag Palavestra's book from 1977 was followed by concomitant interest in the New Age, C. G. Jung, Far Eastern religions and the European project. In the autumn of 1988, a thematic issue of the influential Belgrade literary journal *Delo* was dedicated to archetypal psychology, Jung's Gnosticism and Dimitrije Mitrinovic.<sup>65</sup> It comes as no surprise that one of the leading authors on Far Eastern religions in ex-Yugoslavia, Dušan Pajin, also wrote extensively on Mitrinovic.<sup>66</sup> Finally, a selection of Mitrinovic's

64 Miodrag Živanov, "Kratka biografija Miloša N. Djurića", in M. Živanov and R. Čajić (eds), *Bibliografija Miloša N. Djurića* (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia, 1983), xi–xxxi.

65 *Delo*, Vol. 34, Nos 9–10 (Sep. – Oct. 1988), 365 p.

66 Dušan Pajin, "Povest o dobrom Evropljaninu", *Književnost*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1984), 33–46. Dušan Pajin, *Ža svečovečansku zajednicu. Dimitrije Mitrinović (1887–1953)* (Belgrade: Pešić i sinovi, 2016).

texts published in 2004 includes an afterword by Predrag Palavestra entitled “European Project of Dimitrije Mitrinovic.” The text is written in such a way that it implies a link between the ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinovic and Serbia’s ambition to join the European Union.<sup>67</sup>

### Mitrinovic’s Legacy to the New Age, Counterculture and a more globalised world

It is much more difficult to conclude if any of Mitrinovic’s concepts have an enduring legacy in Britain, the USA or globally. In this respect, his possible influence on New Age culture would be of particular interest.

One of Mitrinovic’s disciples in the 1930s was Alan Watts (1915–1973), who is nowadays credited with having substantially contributed to the cultural wave that encompassed the hippie movement, psychedelics and other phenomena related to the so-called counterculture. He also helped the sensibilisation of Anglophone societies for the religious traditions of the Far East such as various forms of Buddhism (particularly Zen Buddhism), Taoism and Hinduism.<sup>68</sup>

In his autobiography, Alan Watts mentions four of his “preceptors”, or informal instructors, and lists Dimitrije Mitrinovic among them. Chapter Five of his autobiography is called “My own university” and it is very much about his involvement with Mitrinovic. He described Mitrinovic’s circle in the 1930s as a group dedicated to political activism, but also involved in group meetings based on “a-no-holds-barred mutual psychoanalysis.”<sup>69</sup> He seemed to have quite liked Mitrinovic’s political ideas, although he was not generally too interested in politics, and he also noticed that Mitrinovic “was beginning to foresee the failure of his political ideas.”<sup>70</sup> Yet, what he terms his “own university” essentially consisted of Mitrinovic’s instructions and the teachings of D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), with occasional moments of fascination with other spiritual teachers such as Jidda Krishnamurti (1895–1986).

Therefore, Watts himself outlined his own intellectual debt to Mitrinovic. During his association with Mitrinovic, Watts was already a

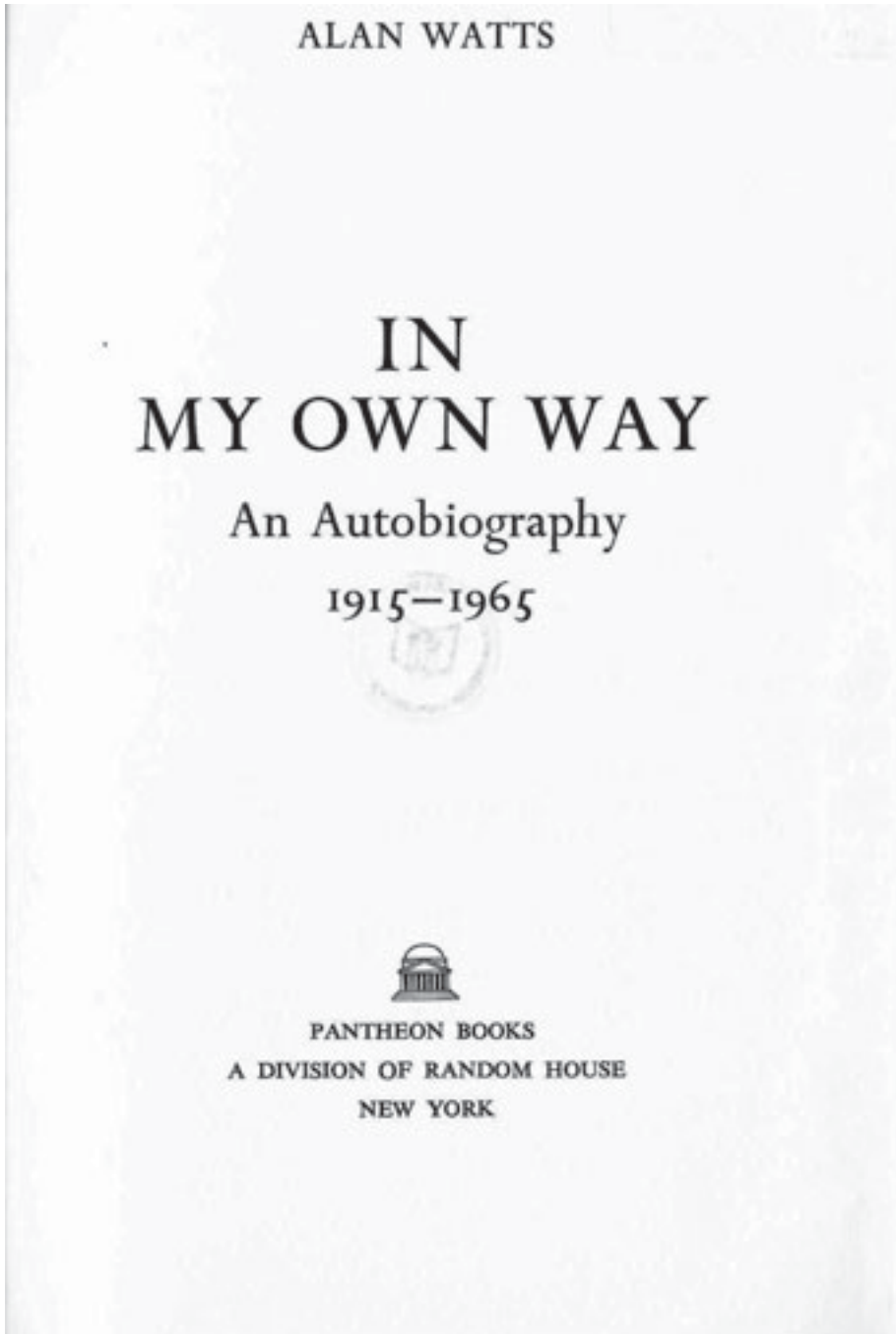
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67 Predrag Palevestra, “Evropsko nasledje Dimitrija Mitrinovića”, in Dimitrije Mitrinović, *Treća sila* (Čačak: Gradac, 2004), 152–155.

68 Monica Furlong, *Zen Effects. The Life of Alan Watts* (Woodstock, Vt. : Skylight Paths Pub., 2001 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1986]), ix.

69 Ibid, 111.

70 Ibid, 122.



*Title page of In my own Way (1972), autobiography by Alan Watts*

Buddhist and therefore Mitrinovic was not responsible for his interest in Eastern philosophy. Watts, however, discovered an idea that he owed to Mitrinovic. It was his concept of “the complementation of the principle of unity and the principle of differentiation in the universe.” Acute differences positively manifested unity in something that Watts called “goeswithness”, something that “the Japanese call *ji-ji-mu-ge*—the mutual interdependence of all things and events. Thus the sharp form of a particular fox’s face necessarily implied the existence of galaxy M 81.”<sup>71</sup> The analysis of Mitrinovic’s legacy to Watts would warrant a special study. For the time being, Mitrinovic’s name is only occasionally mentioned in the studies on Watts.<sup>72</sup> But it is easy enough to see some resemblance between the “primitive rebels” described by Dedijer and the hippie movement. Although they differ substantially in the ways in which they propose to change an unjust world, what truly connects them is their utopian belief in the betterment of humankind. Mitrinovic’s remarkable contribution was that he fused pacifism with the original ideals of the Young Bosnia movement. That is why his last group of followers from the 1930s and 1940s show even more resemblance with some aspects of the hippie and similar pacifist and transcendental movements.

One can certainly credit Mitrinovic as one of the thinkers and activists who facilitated the acceptance of Far Eastern teachings in the Western, particularly Anglo-American mainstream. His disciple A. Watts certainly did much more for that cause, but Mitrinovic was doing it in a period when Eurocentrism was at its peak.

The concept that culture may play a key role in transforming the world is the legacy of many thinkers. It was common to the Forte Kreis and Mitrinovic. Therefore, it could be viewed as the joint legacy of Frederik Van Eeden, Dimitrije Mitrinovic and Eric Gutkind. Of course, the term “culture” should be understood in Mitrinovic’s texts primarily, although not exclusively, as high or elitist culture, and not in the much broader meaning assigned to this term in cultural anthropology. It is therefore a little ironic that his ideas are perhaps more present in counter-culture than in “high cultures”.

The very fact that many authors still deal with the ideas of the Forte Kreis and Mitrinovic indicates that they have some resonance with contemporary dilemmas and the issues humanity is facing in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is also connected with the European idea, which in Mitrinovic’s version had a dominant cultural component, and this ele-

71 Ibid, 109–110. See also Ibid, 282–283.

72 Peter J. Columbus and Donadrian L. Rice, “Introduction: A New Look at Alan Watts”, in Eidem (eds.), *Alan Watts - Here and Now. Contributions to psychology, philosophy, and religion* (New York: State University of New York, 2012), 2, 18.

ment may prove to be more relevant in the decades to come, especially seen in the light of cultural syncretism that the circle of Mitrinovic was sympathetic to.

Finally, Luisa Passerini noticed a possibility for implementing his synthetic way of reasoning in practical political terms. “His ideas about mediation between opposite sides in society – for instance the Senate function – which appeared unrealistic in the political context of the inter-war period, have become a practice for psychologists and social workers resolving social conflicts in some European countries, and might be further developed.”<sup>73</sup>

Mitrinovic’s legacy would therefore be in defining the way how to go beyond political divisions, identifying the sphere of culture as the crucial element of social change and understanding the future European project as a cultural construct. At the same time, his overall activities should be understood as an effort to bring various religions and cultures much closer to the point that they could not only communicate but would also be able to mutually combine ideas and concepts from different cultures. Seen from that point of view, Dimitri Mitrinovic was not only the result of cultural transfers and their agent. He was someone who pursued a utopian project of preparing small groups of people who would be able to absorb all those transfers and be capable of creating as a result a cosmopolitan identity. That new global identity would not be based on mere openness to different cultures but rather on the ability to integrate different, and sometimes conflicting, traditions into a new cosmopolitan whole.

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73 Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love. Love in Europe*, 145.

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